nature net
The NatureKenya Newsletter www.naturekenya.org May 05

Gardening and Compost-making

Friday 20 May 2005 at the Nairobi Arboretum

A one-day course conducted by the Friends of the Nairobi Arboretum (FONA). Skills to be taught include basic landscaping, hedge pruning, plant propagation, soil aeration, fertilizers, colour wheels, tree trimming and balance, and, of course, how to convert litter into compost manure!

Writing materials and lunch provided. At the end, a certificate of participation is awarded.

The course starts at 9:30 a.m. and ends at 4:30 p.m. Charges are Ksh 600/- per person. Register at the Nature Kenya office by the registration deadline of May 15.
E-mail: fona@naturekenya.org

Help complete the picture!

What do we need to complete the new centre space? Shop accessories, displays and storage shelves, plants, networking, phones and toilet and water facilities etc.

If you are able to help and support Nature Kenya in any way, please get in touch with the Membership Marketing Officer at office@naturekenya.org

Editorial Team
Editor Catherine Ngarachu
Evening Skies Fleur Ng'weno
Naturalist's Corner Dino Martins

IN HOUSE

Annual General Meeting

of the East Africa Natural History Society

Thursday 12 May 05 at 4:30 p.m.
at the Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums, Nairobi

This really is your opportunity to know Nature Kenya. Meet other members, representatives from the committees and projects, field and office staff, Executive Committee members, volunteers: they are all there, ready to help you with your queries, to tell you more about Nature Kenya and its work.

Programme

4:00 p.m. Welcome to a cup of tea or coffee (You are welcome to contribute biscuits/cake/mandazi/ samosa etc to the tea table - thank you!)
4:30 p.m. Convene in Hall
Agenda
...Minutes of the 94th AGM
...Matters arising from the Minutes
...Chairman s Report
...Honorary Treasurer s Report
...Appointment of Honorary Auditor
...Committees and Projects presentations
...Nature Uganda report
...Any other business for which due notice has been given to the Honorary Secretary, signed by not less than 2 members, not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting
...Election of office bearers and Trustees

Evening Get-together

6:00 p.m. Barbeque and cash bar

action

ABC News

The African Bird Club has launched its new country based birding resources website.

You can find the site by following the links to African Birding Resources from the ABC Home page at www.africanbirdclub.org. The work has been a collaborative effort with Birding Africa and some 50 or so African ornithology specialists who were involved in writing information for the site.

In parallel, they have launched an Identification Challenge, which you can also find from the ABC Home page. Feedback would be appreciated on the usability of the site and accuracy of the information, which you can send to info@africanbirdclub.org

To a large extent, the direction in which the site will develop will be determined by feedback from users. It is already clear however that the inclusion of a few high quality photographs for each country adds to the general interest. If you have some photos of habitat or species, which can be added to the site, or indeed further written material, please send to info@africanbirdclub.org

OPPORTUNITIES

OUTDOOR AFRICA

Leading you into the Wild!

Outdoor Africa trains and empowers leaders who engage in safe wilderness experiences and are committed to environmental conservation.

Outdoor Africa seeks to recruit new instructors for its outdoor courses and first aid wilderness programs. Women are particularly encouraged to apply. Though recruitment is ongoing, the first successful applicants must be available to start the intensive training course from 1st June 2005.

Application forms are available on request from info@outdoorafrica.org. For further information about Outdoor Africa, log on to www.outdoorafrica.org or call 020 3745130 / 0722 715853 / 0733 922556.

Special Introductory Offer for Students

Free student subscription to *IBIS* for 2 Years

IBIS publishes original papers, reviews and short communications reflecting the forefront of research activity in ornithological science

Special emphasis on the conservation, ecology, ethology, evolution and systematics of birds

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Reduced rate subscriptions are available for students and those resident in developing countries. For further information contact the BOU Office - email bou@ bou.org.uk

Congratulations to our BirdLife Partner in Australia, which Hits The Ton!

The Bird Observers Club of Australia (BOCA), based in Melbourne, will celebrate its 100th birthday with a Melbourne based art exhibition, a tree planting, a people-driven history, a Centenary Dinner and a Medallion Presentation Dinner, as well as a series of Australia-wide outings, tours and camps. Should you be considering travelling to Australia please visit their website at www.birdobservers.org.au for further information.

Bird Observers Club of Australia
1905 • 2005
CENTENARY

*****

Nature Kenya is also looking forward to a centenary birthday in four years (the East Africa Natural History Society was established in 1909) - to celebrate, we'd love to hear your really great ideas!

CLASSIFIEDS

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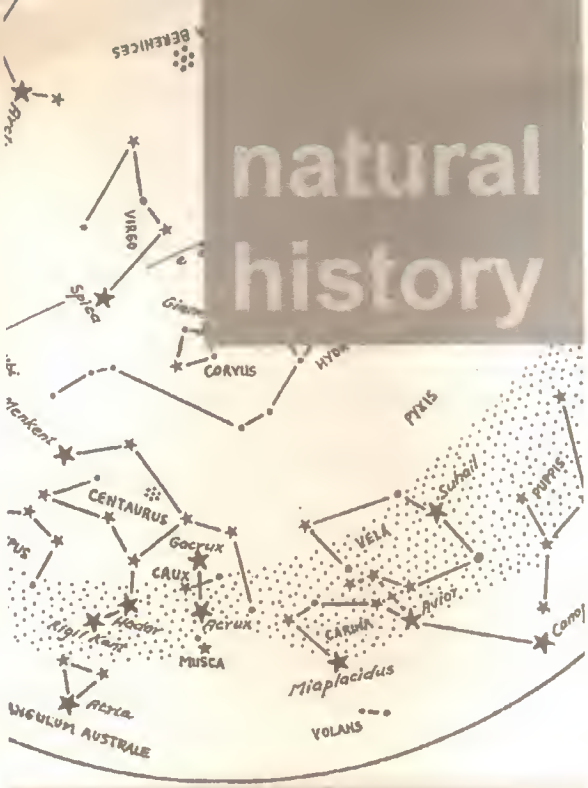

natural history

EVENING SKY

By Ian Mackay

Moon, May 05

1 May, last quarter; 8 May, new moon; 16 May, first quarter; 23 May, full moon; 30 May last quarter.

Planets, May 05

The brilliant planet Venus reappears low in the west at dusk. Across the sky, bright Jupiter is in the east at sunset. Jupiter can be seen all night as it travels west across the sky.

Reddish Mars and tiny Mercury are visible in the morning before dawn.

May Stars

The brightest stars on May evenings are Sirius, setting in the west; Arcturus, glowing orange-yellow high in the northeast, and Alpha and Beta Centauri, the two bright stars of the Centaur constellation, pointing to the Southern Cross.

The Southern Cross constellation, a cross shape formed by four bright stars and a fainter one, stands almost upright in the south. In the north, the constellation of the Plough or Big Dipper is a box shaped by four stars, with three other stars trailing behind it.

MAY AT A GLIMPSE

Sat 7	ASF Birdwalks & NRF walk
Thu 12	EANHS AGM
Sat 14	Tree Walk
Sun 15	Sunday Birdwalk
Fri 20	Gardening & Compost Course
Mon 30	Tree Walk

Birdwalks every Wednesday Marning
Bird ringing every Thursday Morning

A long way from Karamoja

Karamoja Apalis by Brian Finch

By Gordon Boy

Since August last year, when news broke of the first record for Kenya of the **Karamoja Apalis**, *A. karamajae*, Kenyan birds of this species have – not surprisingly – been high up on the 'must see' lists of many of the country's leading birders.

Some of these birders – including, in January this year, both **Brian W Finch** and **Nigel Hunter** – have been rewarded with excellent views of the species in *Acacia drepanalabium* (Whistling Thorn) scrub close to the main Narok-Keekorok road, near the Maasai Mara National Reserve.

It was in this same area, in early August 2004, that British ornithologist **Dr Philip Shaw** first saw the species in Kenya. Until then, the presence in East Africa of the Karamoja Apalis was thought to be restricted to just two small, isolated populations: one in and around the Kidepo National Park in far NE Uganda, and the other on the Wembere flood plain south of Lake Eyasi in remote west-central Tanzania. Shaw's record – posted initially on the Tanzania BirdNet – was the first for this species from anywhere in Kenya.

"It seems incredible, now, that the Karamoja Apalis – which is still not on the Kenya List – should have proved so elusive down the years," says Finch, who finally caught up with the Kenya birds on 4 January this year, and who then took "at least 50" photographs *(including the one repraduced here)* of a "surprisingly effusive" foraging pair.

"It may be," Finch reasons (on the Kenya BirdNet), "that, until Phil Shaw [who has been studying this species in Tanzania] came along, nobody had ever really *looked for* the birds in Kenya. Or that in Kenya, the thought of walking through uninvitingly dense stands of Whistling Thorns had never been considered an ornithological necessity!"

With **Albie Venter**, manager of the nearby Shompole-Naibor Camp, Finch went on, over the next few days (5-7 January), to observe – and photograph – other pairs of the birds. "Their behaviour," he writes, "is not consistent with that of a typical Apalis. Continual side-to-side tail swinging suggests an affinity (unlikely though this may seem) with the Red-fronted Warbler.

"The strong direct flight and pair-bonding duets are reminiscent," he adds, "of another unlikely species, the Red-winged Grey Warbler, while the song itself is a slurry whistle quite unlike that of any other species of Apalis."

Nigel Hunter, visiting the area on 22 January with **Leo Niskanen**, describes (again, on the Kenya BirdNet) having spent an hour and a half traversing an extensive *Acacia drepanalabium* stand on foot in difficult windy conditions, before sighting "a small, long-tailed bird flying between Whistling Thorns."

This bird proved to be a Karamoja Apalis, and was soon joined by another bird. "The white wing panel in the clean grey upper parts is very noticeable," Hunter writes, "while the grey blends in surprisingly well with the colour of the Whistling Thorn galls.

"On neither bird, however, could we see any white loral stripe between eye and bill – as shown in the illustrations in both Stevenson and Fanshawe's and Sinclair's *Birds of Africa sauth af the Sahara*."

Hunter and Niskanen then tried to record on tape the song of these two birds, as they started to duet. The wind rendered this virtually impossible, however. "And what duetting we did manage to get on tape" Hunter muses, "is rather drowned out by what amounts to a good demo recording of how these trees come to be called Whistling Thorns!"

Finch, meanwhile, speculates that, as we now know what habitat the species likes, a diligent search could reveal other pairs of the birds along the Narok-Keekerok road. "The Kedong Valley, where there must be 100 kms, or more, of suitable habitat, might also be worth investigating," he adds..

Up & about

DECLARATION

Nature Kenya does nat accept any respansibility whatsaever in respect af negligence af any af its staff, volunteers ar members arganising the autings/trips ar far any lass, injury, death ar damage ta praperty.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. *Those wha are nat members can get temparary membership at Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payable an arrival at the car park.*

Lake Victoria Sunset Birders (Kisumu)

The Lake Victaria Sunset Birders are a Nature Kenya Site Support Graup and organise bird walks at sites in and around Kisumu every Friday of the month. For further details call 057 42952 or 0734 994938 or email lakevictoriasunsetbirders@yahoo.co.uk

Mt Kenya Biodiversity Conservation Group (MKBCG)

The MKBCG is a Nature Kenya Site Support Group and arganise bird walks to sites around Naro Moru every last Saturday of the manth **i.e. 28 May 05.**
For mare infarmatian cantact 0722 364904, 0733 937115 ar 062 62071 Email: mt_kebia@yahao.ca.uk

TREE WALKS

Guided tree walks in the Arboretum on the second Saturday and last Monday, i.e. **14 & 30 May from 9:30 a.m.** Meet at the Arboretum gate. *Thase wha are nat members af FONA ar Nature Kenya pay Ksh 100/- fee an arrival at the gate.*

SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet at the National Museum, Nairobi car park at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, **i.e. 15 May**. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museums' Nairabi Botanic Garden, at 7:00 a.m. every Thursday.

Ngong Road Forest Walks (Nairobi)

Organised by the Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust, nature walks are held on the first and third Saturdays of the month i.e. **7 & 21 May, at 9:00 a.m.** Meet at the stairs leading ta the Restaurant at the Racecourse. Call Anthony Chalo to confirm on 575207 or 0733 712406.

ARABUKO-SOKOKE (COAST)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sakake Forest Guides Assaciation is on the first Saturday af each month i.e. **7 May, at 6:30 a.m.** from the Visitar Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person. KWS fees now apply (100/- Citizens, 500/- Residents)

FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends af Fart Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday af each manth, i.e. **21 May.** Please call Marlene Reid an (041) 491 648 to confirm

Plan your weekend or other break to stay at the

Kinangop Guest House

Perched on the Kinangap Plateau with incredible views across the Rift Valley, the farm combines tussock-grass pasture, indigenaus farest, and attractive gardens. The guesthouse is comfortable and fully furnished. Visitors can enjoy hikes and walks on the farm or go further afield with local guides.

For more information, brochure and non-member rates please contact Nature Kenya.

Guest House rates: Day visit 350/-

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3 pax	4,900/-	7,400/-
4 pax	5,800/-	8,300/-

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NatureKenya

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World Birdwatch (the BirdLife International magazine)	1500	
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Friends of Nairobi Arboretum Single - 400/-, Student - 250/-, School or Club - 800/-		
African Bird Club (Student 500/-)	800	
DONATE & ***Help us to do even more!***	5000/Other	
Total		

If you live reside outside of Kenya please refer to www.naturekenya.org